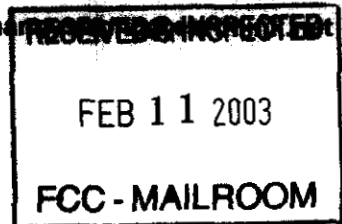


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FEB 13 2003

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20 January 2003

Mr. Michael Powell, Chair
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I cannot tell you how distressed I feel over the narrowing of media sources in this country. Increasingly, I must look to sources outside the United States for broad-based, reliable information. It is bad enough that the major networks no longer have independent, well-funded news departments. (I also recall Dan Rather, as a member of a panel on this subject, saying that no network has a staff person assigned to the United Nations.) *I find this situation sad for me personally, and indeed a threat to our being a vital, well-informed democratic society.*

I urge you to make media diversity a high priority for the FCC.

Sincerely,

Nancy Strong
Nancy Strong

Hope I'm not a voice in the wilderness!

P.S. I wrote this before seeing this editorial in the N.Y. Times. The FCC has important work to do to keep the airwaves open and not in the control of an exclusive few, no matter how well-intentioned, or well-heeled. The American people, like myself, count on you to regulate — it's important.

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Friendly Hosts, Effective Lobbyists

Nancy Victory's lobbyist friends representing wireless phone companies threw her a party in 2001 when she was named the Bush administration's top telecommunications policy adviser at the Commerce Department. The Washington Post reported this week that it took about 100 lobbyists to throw the party. But the Federal Communications Commission, which oversees the industry, said it was not clear how much influence the party had on her views.

Ms. Victory says it would be "ridiculous" to infer the party had influenced her views. These are simply old friends, she insisted, paying for the evening out of their own pockets. Still, it showed terrible judgment, while providing further evidence of the way business and its regulators work and play together.

The indifference of the Commerce Department's ethics office was appalling. It told Ms. Victory the party was fine as long as the lobbyists were using their own money — a less-than-comforting test that wasn't even met. Tellingly, one of Ms. Victory's friends deemed the party a business expense. More important, the department lawyers' determination that the party was fine — that Ms. Victory didn't need to report the party as a gift — because the benefit to her was limited to a night of good food and drink.

One's instinct here is to ask Congress to take a look. Congress? This month the House relaxed its ban on gifts. Dennis Hastert says he wants Congressional staff members to be able to eat pizza and Chinese food sent over by thoughtful lobbyists without feeling guilty — as if they had no other source of food.

NYT 1/25/03

